# Early Piety,

OR THE

# ADVANTAGES

OF AN

# *Early Converſion*

OPENED,

In Two DISCOURSES

From *Eccl.* xii. 1.

*Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, while the Evil Days come not, nor the Years draw nigh, in which thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them.*

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To which is added,

A Word of Advice to Youth, in order to Converſion.

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# THE EPISTLE TO Young Readers,

## Looking towards the Kingdom of God.

Dearly Beloved in our Lord,

THE *Hopes, that there is a Harveſt of Young Ones to Chriſt, for which the* Fields *are* Already White, *when*

*when Chriſt ſhall have in this ſenſe the* Dew *of* his Youth *from the* Womb of the Morning, *and You* Free-will Offerings *to Him in that* Day *of his* Power, *This gives Encouragment of this Addreſs to you, in Confidence, there will be many of You Readers: It is Evident Young Perſons are One Eminent Portion of the Lord Jeſus his Love, and Care; and ſo of the Goſpel Miniſtry, and of the Servants of God in all Ages; God was aſſured of* Abraham, *he would* Inſtruct *his* Children after Him *in his Knowledge, and Fear:* Moſes *took great Care of this, to leave Monuments for Young* Iſraelites *growing up;* David *the Father gave Excellent Principles to his Son* Solomon; *And in a Holy Zeal, and Love to Young Men, cries out,* Wherewithal ſhall a Young Man cleanſe his Way? *As if he ſhould ſay, What Spiritual Engine ſhall I find to raiſe the Hearts of Young Men, to Buoy them up from the World, the Raging Sea of Vanity,*

*nity, Luſt, and Wickedneſs? I ſhould rejoice in ſuch a One, and I have found it, even thy Word, to which they ſhould always give heed.* Solomon *in this Penitential Sermon of his, after ſome Declinings, recovering the Piety of his Youth in which he ſtiles himſelf* Eccleſiaſtes, *or the* Preacher *is much engaged in it; as you will ſee in the Following Diſcourſes.* Jeſus Chriſt *in Love to the Riſing Hopes of Young Ones, Bleſſed early, even Infant Age: The* Beloved Apoſtle, *that lay in the* Boſom *of* Chriſt, *ſays,* I write to you, Young Men, becauſe you are ſtrong, *Vigorous in Mind, Body, full of Spirit, and Vivacity; and in all of them who are Chriſtians, the Word of God abideth; and as Vigorous Perſons, the Champions of Chriſt* overcome the Wicked One, *though the* Strong Man; *Obadiah* feared God from his Youth, *that early Saint of the* Old Teſtament: Timothy *of the* New Teſtament, Knew the Scriptures from a Child. Chriſt *remembers the* Kindneſs

*of*

*of* Youth, *the Love of First Espousals, before farther Alienations from him, and Prostitutions to Sin, Satan, the World;* His Soul desires the First Ripe Fruit. *Oh that all this might perswade; But I especially recommend the following Directions, prepar'd for you, given forth by some Excellent* Master *of* Assembly, *whom I will not attempt to suppose, who he was, being not entrusted with it; and whether he did not* Animam in Vulnere Ponere; *He did not draw out his very Spirit, and Life in shooting this* Sharp Arrow *of Christ into your Hearts, that you might fall under Christ; Oh therefore, You in the Ascendency of Life, against all Temptation, flee Youthful Lusts, sacrifice this Choice Part of Life to God; take heed that Curse come not on you; You who have in your Flock this Male of Life, even Youth, Oh design not to* Vow, *to* Sacrifice *to God the* Corrupt Thing *of* Old Age; *Grown old in Sin: The Brand of a Deceiver is set on all such;* Know therefore in this your Day, *the* Lord hath made

for

for *you the* Day *of your* Visitation, the Accepted Day *of* Salvation, *the* Things *of your* Peace; *This is recommended to you, in the following Instructions, under the Blessing of the Eternal Father, through the Redemption of the Eternal Son, by the mighty Efficacy of the Eternal Spirit, the* One Eternal God, *the Ancient of Days, the Father of Lights, with whom is no variation of Age, nor shadow of Turning to the West of Days, to whom be Glory for Ever.* Amen.

Early

# Early Piety,

## OR THE

# ADVANTAGES

## OF AN

# Early Converſion.

*In Two Diſcourſes.*

## I. DISCOURSE.

Eccl. xii. 1.

*Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, while the Evil Days come not, nor the Years draw nigh, in which thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them.*

THE two Great Duties of a Chriſtian's Life, is to Ceaſe to do Evil, and Learn to do Well: The one is Negative, the other is Poſitive. No Man can

be Good that doth not Ceaſe to do Evil; therefore *Solomon* Exhorts to the former in the Eleventh Chapter from the Fourth Verſe, and brings it in thus, *Put away Evil from thy Fleſh.* It referrs to the Ninth Verſe, *Know that for all theſe things God will bring thee to Judgment.* That is, thoſe Youthful Luſts, thoſe Senſual Pleaſures. *Rejoice, O young Man, and let thy Heart Chear thee in the Days of thine Youth*; as if he ſhould ſay, if thou art bent to Spend thy youthful Days in Luſt, then go on, and ſee what follows; there is a Deluge of Wrath, a Day coming; and tho' the Beginning may be Sweet, yet the Concluſion will be Bitter; for *know that for all theſe things God will bring thee to Judgment*; and then the Poſitive Part, that in the Words of the Text, *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth. Childhood and Youth is Vanity*, and Vanity is nothing more than Indulging the Fleſh, and Forgetting God.

Wherein he gives this ſeaſonable Counſel for the Cure of their Vanity, *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, while the Evil Days come not, and thy Pleaſures draw nigh.*

In which Words you have an Exhortation, and it is backt with a Threefold Argument.

1. The Act, *Remember.*

2. The Object to be Remembred, *thy Creator.*

3. The Time when, *now.* But leaſt you ſhould think that this *now* takes in the whole Time of this Life, therefore he Excludes the latter Part of this Life, and Limites this *now* to the former Part, *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth.* Old Age is Haſtning, Mor-

Mortality Approaching, and Judgment Enſuing; that you have in the Verſes following my Text, *While the Stars be not Darkened, nor the Clouds returning after the Rain; before the Day that thy Strength fails, and the Grinders ceaſe.*

2. You have an Argument from Death and Mortality Approaching, in the Sixth Verſe, *Or the Silver Cord be Looſed, or the Golden Bowl be Broken, or the Pitcher be Broken at the Fountain, or the Wheel Broken at the Ciſtern:* And in the Seventh Verſe, *Then ſhall Duſt Return to the Earth.* When? *When the Sun is Darkened, and the Keepers of the ſtrong Houſe Tremble. Then ſhall Duſt Return to the Earth.*

3. You have the Judgment Enſuing in the Seventh Verſe, *Then ſhall the Duſt Return to the Earth as it was, and the Spirit ſhall Return unto God who gave it*; and in the Eighth Chapter and Eighth Verſe, *There is no Man that hath Power over the Spirit to Retain the Spirit; neither hath he Power in the Day of Death: And there is no Diſcharge in that War, neither ſhall Wickedneſs deliver thoſe that are given to it.* As the Body of every one Returns to Duſt, ſo doth every Soul Return to God; not to God as the chief Good, but to God as the great Judge; not to his Bliſsful Preſence, but to his Judicial Preſence. So ſaith the Wiſe Man, Third Chapter Seventeenth Verſe. *God ſhall Judge the Righteous, and the Wicked*; ſo that there is ſuch a Return of the Soul to God; he hath Summon'd him to his aweful Tribunal, where he is ſent to his Everlaſting State, either to Enjoy God for Ever, or Everlaſtingly Shut out. Old Age is

haſtning, and Death follows, and then he comes to Judgment; therefore *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth.*

I ſhall open the Words, and then apply them.

1. I Begin with the Act, *Remember*; this is applied ſometimes to God; he is ſaid to Remember, God remembred *Noah*, *Gen.* 8. 1. he remembred *Abraham*, he remembred his whole Covenant. But to ſpeak properly, there is no ſuch thing in God as Remembring, for he that can never forget, can never properly be ſaid to remember. Sometimes to call to Mind; thus it is ſaid, *Then* Peter *Remembred the Words of Chriſt*; and as it Imports the keeping in mind of the time to come, ſo it is ſaid to *Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it Holy.*

1. It is oppoſed to the forgetting of Duty.

2. It is oppoſed to the ſlight Performance of it, both which are Sins. It is a Sin to forget God, it is a Sin to have ſlight Thoughts of God. *Remember thy Creator.* The Manner in which the Duty is Inforced is ſuch as doth Import, That it ought to be our chief Buſineſs. God doth not uſe in his Word to put his *Memento* on ſlight Duties; Rev. 1. 2, 5. *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and Repent, and do thy firſt Works.*

3. To mind us of our latter End, *Eccl.* 11. 8. *If a Man Live many Years, and Rejoice in them all, yet let him Remember the Days of Darkneſs, for they ſhall be many; all that cometh is Vanity.*

4. To keep in our Hearts the Great Works of his Providence in Remembrance, *Mat.* 16. 9. ſaith Chriſt, *Remember the Five Loaves that fed Five Thouſand.*

5. To

5. To Excite you to a Full and Compleat Obedience.

6. To ſtir us up to be mindful of himſelf, and therefore this Duty above all the reſt, is Charged both Negatively and Poſitively, *Deut.* 9. 7. *Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God.* Why doth God put a *Memento* on this Duty? Here there is a Fivefold Reaſon for it.

1. To Intimate their Oppoſition; depraved Man cannot endure his Obedience to God, therefore he calls us to Remember it.

2. The Sum of Religion lies in the Obſervation of this one Command. *Jacob* gave ſevere Charge to his Sons concerning *Benjamin* becauſe he lay Neareſt his Heart; it is that that Enflames our Spirits for all other Duties, and makes them fit for every good Work. Sin never more prevails than when God is Shut out.

3. It implies, that there is no Age ſo prone to forget God as that of Youth, therefore *Solomon* ſaith, *Childhood and Youth is Vanity.* So by the Courſe of Nature young Ones may think to Live Long by Reaſon of the many that through the Frailties of Nature may Die, while they Live; haſt thou not the Seeds of Death in thee? And haſt thou not ſeen the Cauſes of Death lying before thee; and therefore though thou may'ſt pleaſe thy ſelf with the Thoughts of Living many Years, yet thou mayeſt Die to Morrow; and as Youth is Vanity in a Natural Senſe, ſo it is in a Moral Senſe; *For by the Offence of one Judgment came upon all to Condemnation.* But alas! how much Guilt haſt thou Contracted by Actu-

al Sin, thy Sinful Mirth and Levity, thy Slothfulneſs and Vanity? Theſe are Common Sins of Youth, therefore *Remember now thy Creator.*

4. It is a Duty of Great Equality, not only from the Will of him that Commands it. As the Command it ſelf is moſt Juſt; How Equal is it that God, who is the Firſt Cauſe, and Chief Good, ſhould be firſt owned, beſt loved, and moſt ſerved? And is it not Equal, yea, a Direct Duty, ſo Rare a Jewel ſhould be employed to him that gave it.

5. God uſes ſuch a *Memento* to mind us of the ſtrict Account we muſt give to God for our time. Therefore the wiſe Man warns us of a Judgment-day to Come, Eccl. 11. 9. *Rejoice, O Young Man, in thy Youth; but know for all theſe things God will bring thee to Judgment.* If we forget our Obedience to God, he will not forget our Diſobedience. But it is not barely an Act of the Mind; it is not enough for you to remember to think of God, for ſo the Damned in Hell think of God; for then the Memory of the Damned ſhall be Quick and Strong for ever. Now the Sins of Youth are committed and forgotten by us; and though we ſay, *They ſhall never be remembred any more, and the Lord ſeeth us not,* Ezek. 8. 12. So Pſalm 21. *Theſe things haſt thou done,* ſpeaking of their Sins before, *Theſe things haſt thou done, and I kept ſilence; but I will Reprove thee, and ſet them in Order before thine Eyes.* If Sinners could forget in Hell, it would be a Happineſs Comparative to their Loſs, though never ſo Great; yet if thy Tormen-

ment were to be over and forgotten, what an Unhappineſs would it be to Remember, what a God, what a Creator, what a Redeemer, was tendered to me, and therefore I might have ſecured; I have once and again had the Means of Grace, heard the Preacher often call me to leave my Sins, and the Spirit ſtriving with me to bring it about; and had I had but Wiſdom to conſider, and a Heart to apply, Oh how happy had I been! And therefore this Miſery is the Fruit of my own Doings. To Remember loſt and paſt Opportunities, O how will this Torment me? Wretch that I was, that could find time for every thing elſe; but my time is Coming.

I found time for my Games, and Sports, and youthful Vanities, but I could find no time for God and my Soul. Chriſt told me, *His Yoak was Eaſie, and his Burthen Light*; it was but forſaking Luſt, and Cordial Accepting and Imbracing Chriſt, and I had been Happy for ever. *Seek my Face, and Live. Remember thy Creator now in the Days of thy Youth.* Oh how Ripe for Judgment was I, when I thought my ſelf Young enough for this Work, when I Cenſured the Ways of God as Needleſs and Preciſeneſs!

To Remember what it was we Choſe in lieu of Heaven and Bleſſedneſs; this will Amaze and Confound. A Senſual Satisfaction of the Fleſh, a Heap of Gold, or a Puff of Honour, this is all I have for an Immortal Soul. So that you ſee God Remembers them in Hell. For if here the Mind is ſo Diſtracted, as to Divert th

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Thoughts off from the proper Object, God is a perpetual Remembrancer: Not as to deliver thee from thy Torment, but to puniſh thee, not as a Comforter, but as a Tormentor: And it will be the Greateſt Torment to remember what a Heaven there is, and what a Hell there is. Muſt it not Comprehend the whole Duty of Man? It is Uſual with the Call of God in the Scripture, to Include all the Operations of God in the Soul. Sometimes we are Commanded to Love God, ſometimes to Fear God, and ſometimes to Seek God, and ſometimes to Remember God; ſo that this Neglect to *Remember thy Creator*, puts us upon a Four or Fivefold Duty.

1. This Remembring ſuppoſes and implies Knowledge. You can never Remember your Creator, unleſs you know who he is; the Knowledge of him is thy firſt Step to Salvation; he would have all Men to be ſaved, and come to the Knowledge of the Truth: Therefore the Great Deſign of the Devil is to blot out of the Heart the Kingdom of God, and plant his own, his Kingdom being a Kingdom of Darkneſs: Therefore he that doth not know God, cannot come of his Kingdom. And he cannot be rightly known, but by Jeſus Chriſt. Without the Knowledge of Chriſt, we ſhould be Miſerable with all our Knowledge; yet it is Neceſſary to us who are by Sin Obnoxious to God's Wrath, John 17. 1, 3. *This is Life Eternal, to know the Only True God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent*; if we do not know God, we cannot know what is our Duty; the more

more we come to underſtand the Nature of God, the Offices of Chriſt, the more we ſhall know our Duty; there can be no right Knowledge of God, but in and through Chriſt; every one that partakes of this Life, hath it from Chriſt. *No Man hath ſeen God at any time, ſave the only begotten Son, who is in the Boſome of the Father, he hath declared him*, *John* 1. 18. This Remembring ſuits Faith; he cannot be ſaid to Remember God, who doth not in Remembring God, truſt in him: Others truſt in Creatures, but we will truſt in the Creator; then God is Remembred aright, when Remembring is accompanied with Truſting in him. *Iſa.* 26. 8. *The Deſire of our Soul is to thy Name, and to the Rememebrance of thee.*

3. This Remembring implies Repentance. Forgetfulneſs and Impenitency always go together. A due Senſe of the Evil of Sin, and Sorrow for it, is found in this Remembrance of God. Again, if there be no Conception of the Nature of God, his Holineſs and Juſtice, there can be no Repentance, but Sinning againſt him. *Job* 42. 5, 6. *Mine Eyes ſee thee, wherefore I abhor my ſelf in Duſt and Aſhes. When* Peter *Remembred the Words of Chriſt, then he went out and Wept bitterly*, Mat. 26. 7. Till we conſider God in the Purity of his Holineſs, and in the Tenders of his Mercy, we can never truly Repent of Sin.

4. This Remembring of God carries Love in it; the Object is every way Amiable; and God's Deſign and End is not to be remembred only by us, but to be beloved. The higheſt Act of Honour the Creature can do to God, is to truſt

truſt in him, and love him: a remembring of God, without ſuitable Reſpect, will neither be profitable nor durable; then a Man remembers God aright, when his Affections are ſuitable to his Apprehenſions.

Then you ſhall remember your own Evil Ways, and ſhall loath your ſelves; or as it is in the Word of God, no Man can remember aright, that doth not believe it, and love it: Look what that is we love beſt; what we love, we delight to think on; as what we ſlight, we ſoon forget. Now he that hath but a Common Acquaintance, he is ſoon forgotten by his abſence; a known Proverb, *Out of ſight, out of mind:* But a dear Friend he lives in the Mind, when perhaps he is dead in the Grave; ſo God, he is loved with the Heart and Soul, when we devote our ſelves to him, when *the deſire of our Soul is to thy Name, and to the remembrance of thee, Iſa.* 26. 8. This remembring of God implies Obedience; the Will of God, is the Rule of Obedience. Hence is that Counſel of *David* to his Son *Solomon*, thou *Knoweſt the God of thy Father, ſerve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind. Paul*'s firſt Queſtion was, *Who art thou?* and the next Queſtion was, *What wilt thou have me to do?* For this begets love; the more God is beloved, the more readily he will be obeyed. The Glory of God conſiſts not in Notion of him, but in a Conformity to him. *They*, Job 21. 14. *deſire not the Knowledge of His Ways.* Mercy is ſuitable to our wants, but Obedience is repugnant to the Intereſt of the Fleſh, 1 *Sam.* 2. 14. As there

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can be no Obedience where thy God is not known; ſo thy Knowledge of God ſtands for nothing, if thou art not fruitful in Obedience. It was *Moſes*'s Counſel to the People, and mine to you, *Beware that you forget not the Lord your God*; what that is, the next Words tell you, *in not keeping his Commandments* That which we call Remembring, is expreſt by Fearing God, and Keeping his Commandments; which is ſaid to be the whole Duty of Man: *Therefore*, ſaith *David*, in the 119 *Pſalm*, *v.* 55. *I have Remembred thy Name, O Lord, in the Night, and have kept thy Law.* Thus you ſee what this Remembrance of thy Creator carries in it; Faith to God, Repentance towards God, Love to God, and Conformity to the Will of God; That brings me to the Second Thing.

2. The Object to be remembred, is, *Remember thy Creator*, *Job* 35. 10. *None ſaith, Where is God my Maker?* Gen. 6. 7. *The Lord ſaith, I will deſtroy Man whom I have created.* Job 32. 4. *The Spirit of God hath made me, and the Breath of the Almighty hath given me Life.* Mala. 2. 10. *Have we not all one Father? Remember thy Creator*; it is a Term that gives a claim to God of all Obedience from us; he is our Creator, and that gives him a right to thee; all Perſons are mine, whether Father or Son, Old or Young; and this gives God a Juſt Right to all thou haſt, to all thou doeſt. But God is not your own God, you have loſt him by the Fall, that Relation is cut of; but as reſtor'd

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by Chriſt, in and through him it is renewed. Thou oweſt thy Being, thy Well-Being to him; art thou walking with him every Day? he made thee after his own Image; and as thou art therefore more capable, ſo art thou more obliged to remember thy Creator, and honour him.

3. There is a Limitation of Time, and that is *Now*, *Remember now thy Creator*; that *Now* is uſed in a more Extenſive Senſe; all the time that a Man lives in the World; that is, there is no other time to remember God in. There is no remembrance of him in the Grave: Who ſhall give thee any other Time than now? *Eccl.* 9. 10. *For there is no Work, nor Device, nor Knowledge, nor Wiſdom in the Grave, whither thou art going.* As there is no Work, ſo there is no Device; there is no fitting for Heaven there; when once Death comes, it puts an End to all Opportunities, 1 *Cor.* 6, 9. A Great Door; a Door was opened to me of Life: When God ſends, and makes way for the Goſpel, and enlarges the Hearts of Miniſters to preach the Goſpel, and the Hearts of the People to receive this Goſpel, *Luke* 13. 23, 24, 25. *Acts* 14. 27. *They rehearſed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the Door of Faith to the Gentiles.* There is a Door of Faith, but when Death comes, the Door of Faith ſhall be ſhut; *Whoſe Hope ſhall be cut off, and whoſe Truſt ſhall be as a Spider's Web, I ſtand at the Door and knock*; Brethren, God is this Day knocking at the Door of the Hearts of Young ones, and what doth he ſay? *Re-*

*member*

*member now thy Creator: If any hear his Voice, he will open the Door, and come in with him, and he shall sup with me*, Rev. 13. 20. Oh how should young Ones beg of God to open the Door, Roul away the Stone that keeps Christ out of the Heart? And do it now.

Again, *I am the Door, by me if any Man enter in, he shall be saved*, John 5. 10. The Door of Gospel-Grace will be shut, and therefore the Door of God's Bowels and Mercy will be shut; then can be no entring, therefore now Remember thy Creator; that is, now in the time of this Life. And so much for the Extended Sence of this, *Now*, in the Text.

2. Sometimes *now* is used in a more Restrained Sence, not only for this present Life, but for this present Time of the present Life: And so *now* stands for this present Season, and makes the Work of Closing with God in Christ a present Duty, a Duty to be done without delay. *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth.*

The Duty here is not affixed to the first part only, the Days of thy Youth, but now in these Days. The Inforce is, not to know God, when we cannot know our selves; this is the only time both to know our selves, and God; therefore *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth.* In Infancy we are too Young to Live the Life of Man, the Life of Reason; and therefore the Days of thy Youth are the only Days, to Remember thy Creator in; and so I shall come now to a Conclusion: I will come from Ex-

plication to Application, to all that forget God in their Youth. Oh what a common Sin is it! I think it is a Sin that was never ſo common as now; it appears ſo by the many Bills put up by Parents, *&c.* for Undutiful Children that Diſobey their Parents.

Parents may thank themſelves; it is from the Want of timely Inſtruction and Correction, the Want of that at Home, and Evil Example Abroad, that hath ſo Spotted and Stained them, that God is not in all their Thoughts. See how God Diſputes the Caſe; *What Iniquity have your Fathers found in me, that they are become Vain? Neither ſaith they, where is the Lord? What Evil have I done? Have I been a barren Wilderneſs, or a Land of Darkneſs to you?* Jer. 2. 1, 4. Oh what a Shame it is, that any one ſhould forget a God that never did him hurt? Pray conſider that Serious Queſtion, Who made you? Once you were not. *It is he that made us, and not we our ſelves:* Acts 17. 24, 28. *In him we Move, and Live, and have our Being, for we are his Off-ſpring.* Now God is much more the Author of our Being than our Parents; they are but Second Cauſes, God is the Firſt Cauſe; and therefore Man is nothing, if forgotten of God; God is the Firſt Cauſe. *Hear, O Heaven, and give Ear, O Earth:* Heaven and Earth will Cry out againſt us, if he that made us is forgotten by us.

*Wherefore is there a Prize in the Hands of a Fool to get Wiſdom, ſeeing he hath no Heart to Improve it?* Prov. 17. 16. It will be a Sword in his Heart to conſider, I might have had

had God for my God, but I have forgotten him Days without Number. Eccl. 8. 6. *Because to every purpose there is Time and Judgment: Therefore the Misery of Man is great upon him.*

Wherefore because thou hadst not a fit Judgment to discern a fit Opportunity for the greatest Purposes, and then the strict Account that must be given of all Opportunities to God, you must not only give to God the Morning of the Youth, and the Morning of the Lords-day, but the Morning of every Day, for that is best; for then the Body hath had its rest, and our Spirits more Lively, being Fresh, and least Incumbred in the World. It is of Excellent use to keep out Vain Thoughts; it is of Excellent and Great use to Enable us to use the World as if we used it not; nay, it is of use to procure a Blessing of God on all our Lawful Callings: And that our Endeavours and Diligence may be Crowned with success, it is his Promise, *Seek the Kingdom of God first, and all other things shall be added*, Mat. 6. 33. Sirs, consider it, Young Ones, how will your Fruits of Repentance begin, when your Opportunities are past and gone, *Jer.* 11. 17. Thou wast a Fool at first, but thou shalt see thy Folly at last. Young Ones that now Forget God. and Slight Religion, let me tell you, you are a Judgment or a Plague to a Nation. When young Ones are serious, and mind God and their Souls; when it is precious to them to be Awakened and Converted, such a Rise of Youth is a Blessing to any Age; but when Youth casts off Religion, all Duty to

God and Man grows Unprofitable. What ſhall we ſay then? Why then I ſay, this is a ſad Sign of ſome Judgment of God coming upon the Land. Young Swearers, young Sabbath-breakers.

Therefore I tell you, there is ſome ſore Judgment near at Hand, a Day of Waſting and Tribulation. Hearken to the Word of Exhortation, *Now*; *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth.* Look that the Image of God be found in thy Soul, which Image Conſiſts in Righteouſneſs and Holineſs. That there is a natural Image Seated in the Intellectuals; This is the End why God doth it, that we might Remember him ſo as to ſeek him, and to *Seek him while he may be found. They that ſeek me Early ſhall find me:* Wherefore ſaith our Lord, *Seek firſt the Kingdom of God, and his Righteouſneſs, and all other things ſhall be added unto you*; without this Righteouſneſs no Heaven is to be had. *Seek firſt the Kingdom of God*, before any thing elſe, above any thing elſe. Is not Heaven more than the Earth, God better then the World, and Spiritual Bleſſings more than Temporal? Spiritual Bleſſings are beſt, and therefore God promiſes them firſt; *He will give Grace and Glory, and no good Thing will he withhold.* No good Thing? This ſhould direct us in our Duty; ſeek Spirituals, and Temporals ſhall come in; therefore ſeek God above all, and before all, and more than all, for he is all in all, ſince the Fall. God is not to be found, but only in a Mediator. Oh! Get an Intereſt in Chriſt above all things in the World;

World; ſeek and get an Intereſt in Chriſt, a ſaving Cloſe with Chriſt, 1 Pet. 4. 19. *Commit your Souls to him in well-doing as to a faithful Creator.* And therefore let me add one thing, and I will have done; as you muſt Remember God firſt, ſo you muſt Remember him to the laſt: As you muſt Begin with God, ſo you muſt End with him, *Mat.* 2. You read of being call'd to the Work in the Vineyard at very different Hours, ſome at the Third Hour, ſome at the Eleventh Hour; ſo they that did not come in the Morning, came afterward; but they all tarried till the Evening. My Brethren, God muſt have the Duty of the whole Day. *I muſt Work the Work of him that ſent me while it is Day*; for as we hear in the Text we are called to *ſeek him Early*, *Prov.* 8.17. ſo we are commanded to *ſeek him Early*. *Be thou Faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life*, Rev. 2.10. Now I might urge this, which is ſo great, from what God is to us; *For of him, and to him, and through him, are all things, and therefore to him ſhall Glory be for Ever.* Thou haſt a great Work to do, a God to Remember, Sin to Kill, Grace to Get, a Body and Soul to Save, Hell to Secure againſt. Thy Days are here Limited and Bounded to a preſent Seaſon, now; you little think how ſoon Death may come. What warning had the Rich Man; *Thou Fool, this Night thy Soul ſhall be Required of thee.* There is no ſaying to Death, there is one Elder, take him. Sirs, you muſt know that Sin alters the Courſe: I ſay then, the preſent Time is the only Time; Yeſterday can never be Recalled, and to Morrow

it may never come: Opportunities indeed returne no more; but *Man lieth down, and riseth not till the Heavens be no more.* You have but one Arrow to hit the Mark, and if that be Shot, all is gone. Oh that you would be perswaded to hearken to the Call of God, to *Remember thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, before the Evil Days draw near, and thou shalt say, I have no Pleasure in them.*

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# Early Piety,

## OR THE

# ADVANTAGES

## OF AN

# Early Converſion.

*In Two Diſcourſes.*

## II. DISCOURSE.

Eccl. xii. 1.

*Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth, while the Evil Days come not, nor the Years draw nigh, in which thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them.*

THere are two great Concerns which lie upon all our Hands, which ought to be ſeriouſly thought of by us, and duly attended; the one is, *A Wiſe Improving this preſent Life*, and the

the other is, *A careful providing for a better*: two Things which none can be too Diligent about; and he that is truly Faithful in one, will in ſome Meaſure be Conſcientious in both: And both theſe are pointed at in the Text. For he that in the Days of his Youth, Remembers his Creator as he ought, does at once rightly improve the preſent Life, and wiſely provide for that to come. And ſo unites in his Practice thoſe Duties that God hath joined together in the Precept, *Remember thy Creator now in the Days of thy Youth*, &c.

In which Words you have the Call and Command of God to a very Important Duty, wherein we may obſerve.

*Firſt*, The Act or Duty it ſelf, to *Remember*.

*Secondly*, The Object to be Remembred, *Thy Creator*.

*Thirdly*, The Seaſon wherein this Duty is to be put in Practice, *now*. But leſt you ſhould think that this now takes in the whole time of the Preſent Life, therefore he does exclude the latter Part of Life, and limits this *now* to the former Part, *Remember thy Creator now in the Days of thy Youth*.

I did the laſt Year, as ſome of you may Remember upon this Occaſion, ſpeak from theſe Words. I then only opened them to you, and ſhewed the Comprehenſive Sence of them, without making any Obſervation from them. I told you, that this remembring our Creator points to a Fivefold Duty.

*Firſt*, To a right Knowledge of God; and he cannot be rightly known, but in and by Chriſt;

Chriſt; we cannot elſe know the way of doing it; for *he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life:* And therefore the right Remembring our Creator, includes in it a Saving Knowledge of God in Chriſt.

*Secondly*, This Remembring includes believing; we cannot be ſaid to Remember God in the Senſe of the Text, if we do not depend upon him, and truſt in him; therefore *David* expreſſes his Faith in God, by remembring of him, *Pſalm* 20. 7. *Some truſt in Chariots, and ſome in Horſes, but we will remember the Name of the Lord our God:* That is, others truſt in Creatures, but our truſt ſhall be in God.

*Thirdly*, Remembring implies Repenting; Forgetfulneſs and Impenitency always go together, Sinning is called in Scripture, a *Forgetting God*, and Repentance is a calling Sin to Rememberance, with a true ſenſe of the Evil of it, and Sorrow for it, as done againſt God; and therefore where God is forgotten, and out of our Remembrance, there can be no Repentance,

*Fourthly*, Remembring our Creator, carries in it Love and Reſpect. Though an Object be every way Amiable, and made up of Delights, yet it can never be remembred with pleaſure, when it hath no room in our Reſpect. God's Deſign and End in requiring to be remembred by us, is, that he may be loved by us; and his beſpeaking a Place in our Thoughts, is, that he may have a Room in our Hearts. The higheſt Act of Honour the Creature can do to God, is to truſt him, and love him. A Remembrance

of

of God, without ſuitable Reſpect, cannot anſwer the Call in the Text, becauſe it is but paſſant and tranſient: For when any other Object poſſeſſeth our Affections, God is ſoon forgotten and forſaken: What we love, we love to think on, as what we ſlight, we ſoon forget. As it it ſaid of *Jeſhurun*, he forgat God that made him, and lightly eſteemed the Rock of his Salvation.

*Fifthly*, This Remembring of God includes obedience to his Will: Obedience is nothing elſe but Knowledge, digeſted into Affection and Action. Hence is that Counſel of *David* to his Son *Solomon*, *Know thou the God of thy Fathers, and ſerve him with a perfect heart, and a willing mind.* As there can be no Obedience, where God is not known, ſo that Knowledge of God ſtands for nothing, that is not fruitful in Obedience: Mark that Counſel of *Moſes*, *Deut.* 8. 11. *Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God:* How is that? The next Words tell you, *in not keeping his Commandments.* Diſobedience is a forgetting God; ſo that which in the Text is called a *Remembring our Creator*, is in the laſt Chapter of this Book, *ver.* 13. expreſſed, by *fearing God, and keeping his Commandments.* If the Authority of God be caſt off, and we make not his Word the Rule of our Lives, he is as much forgotten in a Scripture Senſe, as if he were utterly ſhut out of our Thoughts: So ſays *David*, *I have remembred thy Name, O Lord, and have kept thy Word.* So that you ſee this Remembring is a very Comprehenſive Term.

Then

Then the Object to be Remembred was opened to you, (*thy Creators*) for in the Original it is in the Plural Number; and ſo it points to Father, Son, and Spirit. It is not ſaid, Remember thy God, but, *Remember thy Creator*. God is not every one's God, but he is every one's Creator; fallen Creatures, they be his Creatures ſtill, as much as ever; and this Remembring him as thy Creator, is that that gives thee a Claim to him as thy God:

And then in the laſt place I opened to you the Seaſon of this Duty, *now*; not *now* as intending any time of Life, but now in the Days of thy Youth. I inſiſted largely upon theſe things, in the opening of them to you, and improved them by a Particular Application: And this is the ſum of what I ſpake laſt Year upon theſe Words.

I now come to give you ſome Obſervations from them; one is this.

That Youth is naturally very prone to forget God; this is plainly implied: For what need elſe of this *Memento* in the Text, *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth*.

Another might be this; that the true and beſt Improvement of Youthful Days, is to devote them to God, to mind Religion betimes.

But I ſhall not ſpeak to any of theſe; my Deſign, at preſent, is to ſpeak to the Words as they lye in the Original.

Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Choice: The Word that we render *Youth*, here the Days of thy Youth is from בחר to Elect,

Elect, to Chuſe; and accordingly *Montanus* renders the Word; *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Choice.*

Now this admits of a double Senſe. Either,

Thy Choice Days, or thy Chuſing Days.

*Firſt*, The Days of Youth they are your Choice Days, the Prime of your Time, the Flower of your Age. As the Spring is the Choice time of the Year, ſo is Youth the Choice time of Life; Nature is then moſt brisk and active, and full of vigor, and the Spirits quick and lively, the Wit ſharp, the Affections ſtrong, the Memory retentive; and therefore there is no time to mind Religion like this Choice time of Youth.

O where now are thoſe *Iſaacs* that meditate whilſt they are young? Where are thoſe *Jacobs* that ſeek for the Bleſſing betimes? Where are thoſe Children that ask their Parents as they under the Law did? What mean the Sabbaths and the Ordinances of the Lord, that we may alſo keep them? Where are the Children amongſt you that ſing Hoſannah's to Chriſt, as they did in the Days of his Fleſh? Theſe are the Young Mens Looking-Glaſſes; and becauſe we are led by Example more than by Precept, therefore the Holy Ghoſt has ſet before you theſe Preſidents in Scripture, that you may imitate and copy them out; theſe are choice Patterns, and if you make Conſcience to follow them in your Choice Days, you will ſhew your ſelves to be a Choſen Generation, Children

dren that God will delight to own. But,

*Secondly*, (For I will paſs that too) the Days of Youth, they are your Chuſing Days; as they are Choice Days, ſo the Days of your Choice Chuſing, What is that? Why it is a deliberate Act of the Soul, it is done upon Conſideration and Debate; when a Man upon a Judgment rightly informed, and Affections thereby ingaged, does cleave to God, and the Ways of God; That is Election and Choice.

The Obſervation then that I ſhall lay down from the Senſe of the Words, is this, that it is the great Concernment and Duty of Young Ones, to make God the Object of their Firſt Choice, to begin with God in their Firſt Setting Out in the World.

We never enter into God's Service aright, till we enter upon it by Choice, for God will have it ſo: Chuſe you this Day whom ye will ſerve, either the true God, or Idols: Not as if it were at their own liberty to ſerve which they pleaſed: no, but to convince them of the Folly of a bad Choice, and to direct them to a right Choice.

But for the clearing of the Doctrine, I will ſhow you, *Firſt*, What it is to chuſe God.

*Secondly*, I will give you the Reaſons of the Concernedneſs of the Duty.

And ſo apply it.

*Firſt*, What is it to chuſe God. It implies Five Things.

*Firſt*, A due Conſideration of the Object, its Nature, Worth and Excellency; till things are duly weighed in the Ballance of a true Judg-

ment, we can never make a right Choice; and here the buſineſs ſticks with Young Ones. In this firſt Work we cannot perſwade them to conſider, they will not weigh things, but they will act according to the inclination, of their Luſts; therefore the Apoſtle adviſes us to reſolve upon trial, *Theſ.* 5. 21. *Prove all things, and hold faſt that which is good:* A Man will never hold faſt that which is Good, until he firſt prove and try it.

Indeed the things which are uſually oppoſed to Religion, are ſuch poor paltry Vanities, that they are not worthy to be ſet in competition with God, or to come into a ſerious Debate: How eaſie is it to reſolve which is fitteſt to be pleaſed, God or the Fleſh? Whether the Tranſitory Pleaſures of Sin ſhould be preferred to the Life and Salvation of an Immortal Soul. A Serious Conſideration on theſe Things, would ſoon determine the Matter on God's ſide.

*Secondly*, This Chuſing of God, implies Eſteem and Preference; for Election and Choice is the preferring one thing before another. Our Choice of all Objects is according to our Eſteem of them: As far as we judge a thing needleſs, ſo far we count it worthleſs. Let a Man have but ſlight Thoughts of God, and his Duties ſhall be as ſhort as his Thoughts are ſlight: Mean Apprehenſions are ever attended with liſtleſs Devotions. It is the Soul that highly eſteems God, that chuſes and ſeeks him. What ſaid *Caleb* and *Joſhua* when they returned from ſpying out the Land of *Canaan*, and had taſted the ſweet Fruits of it? *O*, ſay they,

it

*it is a good Land, let us go up and take it at once:* But the other Spies that undervalued it, laid aside the thoughts of Poſſeſſing, and are for facing about to *Egypt.*

Though God and Chriſt are the beſt Good, yet there are many Competitors that ſtand as Rivals with them in the Soul; and therefore your Choice can never be right unleſs theſe Rivals be trampled under foot. It is ſaid of the Wiſe Merchant, that *when he had found a Pearl of great Price, he went and Sold all that he had, and bought it*, Mat. 13. 46. Firſt, he ſhews his Eſteem of it, as a Pearl of great Price, and then he parts with all to purchaſe it. What a high Eſteem had *Paul* of Chriſt? *The Excellency of the Knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord*, *Phil.* 3. 8. There is his Value of him; and ſee how it drew his Heart after him; *I count all things but Loſs—that I may Win Chriſt.* It is not enough to approve of God and his Ways ſimply, but we muſt approve of them comparatively; not only as good in themſelves, but as better than all other good whatever. We ſhall never chuſe God before all, till we came to Eſteem him above all.

*Thirdly*, This chuſing of God, implies a voluntary Inclination and Deſire; a Man is ſaid to chuſe thoſe things which he Likes and Loves, and which his Soul Inclines to. So that he carried after them, not by the Force of any External Principle, but by his own Propenſion and Inclination, and this ſuppoſes Love; for Deſires are the Natural Iſſues of Love.

The Soul can never mount upward, if the

Affections tend downward; and therefore when the Holy Ghoſt would give an advance to the Life of God in the Soul, he begins firſt with the Affections; ſet your Affections on things above; and then, as Deſires always ſpring from Love, ſo they are drawn forth by a Sence of Want; for what we Love, and have not, that becomes a Want; and Sence of Want will quicken Appetite, and ſet Deſires on Work; now theſe Deſires muſt be fed and ſatisfied, and that none can do, but God; therefore it is God that he chuſes.

*Fourthly*, This chuſing implies a firm Purpoſe, and a fixed Reſolution, of Adhering to our choice. We never chuſe till we bring our Minds and Wills to a firm Purpoſe; there may be many good Thoughts and Wiſhes in the Soul, but ſtill till we are reſolved for God, we do not chuſe him. When the Heart is Peremptory and Fixed for God, that will come to ſomething; when the Soul ſays, I ſee I am an undone Creature, I am convinced of my State, and the Neceſſity of my caſe; I muſt have God, I muſt ſecure an Intereſt in Chriſt, I muſt be Born again, I muſt mind the ſaving of an Immortal Soul, this will come to ſomewhat; and a Profeſſion of Religion (let me tell you) ſignifies very little till it comes to this. *Who is this that hath ingaged his Heart to Approach to me*, ſays God, *Jer.* 30. 21. It is Reſolution that Ingages the Heart for God, and makes our choice of him firm and unalterable; eſpecially if it be deliberate and intire.

*Firſt*, It muſt be Deliberate from a Sence and

and Conſcience of our Duty and Intereſt. Reſolves taken up upon Sudden Surprizes or Preſent Heats, rarely produce any good Effect: This is often the caſe of you young Profeſſors, that are like an Early Spring, all Bloſſoms, but no Fruit; or like a Vapour Exhaled by the Warmth of the Sun, that riſes no higher than the middle Region, where it is condenſed, and Drops down again: This is that very thing that makes ſo many Apoſtates from God and his Ways; they take up a Profeſſion of Religion too ſoon before the Word of God has taken Reſt in the Heart. Indeed a Soul that chuſes God aright, can never Profeſs him too ſoon, the ſooner the better; but he that makes a Profeſſion of God, before he makes a choice of God, before the Word is Rooted in the Heart, or any thing of the Power of Religion is felt within, ſuch a one takes up a Profeſſion too ſoon. It is ſaid of the Seed Sown in ſtony Places, *Mat.* 43. *Forthwith it ſprung up.* Above ground too ſoon; it grows upward, and not downward; all Blade, but no Root: So ſays Chriſt, *Verſe* 21. *Yet hath he not Root in himſelf:* And what follows; *he dureth but for a while.* A Muſhroom Chriſtian, the Birth of a Night, and the Abode of a Day. Such begin too ſoon to hold out with God long: This has cauſed many Scoffers at Religion to take up that Envious Proverb, *A young Saint, and an old Devil*; whereas if they had ſaid, A young Hypocrite, and an old Apoſtate, it had been a Truth too too often Experienced. Flaſhy Affections, that have no Principles to maintain them with-

in, come to nothing; they are like Fire in Green Wood, that burns no longer than it is blown; or like Water hanged over a Quick Flame, that is soon Hot, but when it is taken off again, is as soon Cold; nay, Colder than it was before; because the Natural Spirits are evaporated. How nimbly does the Windmill Work when it blows a Brisk gale, but the Wind no sooner ceases, but the Mill stands: So sudden and immature Resolutions come to nothing; they must be managed with Judgment and Deliberation: *David*'s Practice is an excellent Pattern, *Psalm* 119. 59. *I considered my ways, and turned my Feet to thy Testimonies: David* speaks like a Man under a Dilemma, as having two ways before him; there is the Way of Sin, and Lust, and Carnal Delight; this the Flesh presents, and it seems an easie and a pleasant Way: Ay, but it leads to Destruction. Then there is the Way of God's Commandments: This the Word presents, it is Narrow, it is Troublesome, but it leads to Life, and that makes amends for all. Now when we stand still, and debate upon the Choice, which of these is the better Way, and consider the Loss and the Gain of either Side; and the final Issue of the one Way, and the other, and thereupon resolve to take in with the Ways of God, as promoting our truest Interest and Felicity, this is a deliberate Resolution: And this was the Course of that Prodigal Son, when he came to himself, *Luke* 15. *v.* 17. he first bethinks himself, falls into a serious Debate of his Case, *How many Hired Servants of my Father's have Bread enough, and*

*and I periſh with hunger?* What ſhall I do? *I will ariſe and go to my Father, and ſay unto him, Father, I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son, make me as one of thy hired Servants:* Thus he debates the caſe with himſelf, aud thereupon takes up this reſolve, well, *I will ariſe, and go to my Father*; there is his deliberate Reſolution.

*Secondly*, Our Reſolution muſt be entire; that is, without boggling at any of God's Commands, and without the reſerve of any one Sin or Luſt; for no Man can ſerve two Maſters; the Commands of Chriſt and Satan are abſolutely inconſiſtent; obedience to the one is down right rebellion againſt the other; we muſt not capitulate with Chriſt, and think that ſtrictneſs in ſome Duties will excuſe our Indulgence to any Luſt; the great ſtanding Law of Heaven is, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy ſtrength, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve.* The Work of the Chriſtian Calling is ſuch, as that it cannot be done without this; we have many Enemies to oppoſe, many Sins to conquer, many Luſts to mortifie, many Duties to perform; therefore our Reſolution muſt be entire; and that is a Fourth Thing.

*Fifthly*, This Chuſing in the Text implies a complacency and delight in the object of our choice; though Election be an Act of the Will, yet it is quickened by the Motions of the Affections: As where the Will is bent againſt Sin, there is always a hatred of it included; ſo where-

whereever it fixes upon God, it is attended with pleaſure and delight. When *David* had choſen God for his Portion, he expreſſes a delight in his choice, *Pſalm* 16. *v.* 6. *The lines are fallen to me in pleaſant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage:* This is the Language of a Soul affected with its own Felicity, and the pleaſure it takes in an All-ſufficient Good: So it was in his chuſing the Precepts of God, ſays he, *I have choſen thy Precepts*, Pſalm 119. 173. and in the next Verſe, *Thy Law is my Delight:* A Man loves what he chuſes; and where there is Love in the Choice, there will be Pleaſure in the Service; for to love there is nothing grievous. Thus you ſee what this chuſing God does imply and carry in the Nature of it, and that is the Firſt Thing.

*Secondly*, Let me give you the Reaſons, why it is the Duty of Young Ones thus to chuſe God. Why,

One great Reaſon is, becauſe God commands it, that is the Firſt. Pray mind that of the Apoſtle, 2 Epiſtle *John*, *v.* 4. *I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy Children walking in the Truth, as we have received a Commandment from the Father:* Pray mind, theſe were a Ladies Children, to teach us, there are none too great to be good; theſe Children were found walking in the Truth; not taking a ſtep or two, making it a Buſineſs by the by, as your Genteels, and great Perſons uſe to do; but they perſiſted in it, they were ſteady in the Ways of God, and that in their Childhood, againſt all the Tide and Stream of Youthful Luſts. Now

this

this was that God had commanded. Mark ye, though they were Children, yet God commands this of them, *I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy Children walking in the Truth, even as we have received a Commandment from the Father:* But where do we find this Command, that Youth ſhould devote themſelves to God? You have it in the Text, *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Youth:* And there is a Command older than that, *Pſalm* 78. 5, 6, 7. *He eſtabliſhed a Teſtimony in Jacob, and appointed a Law in Iſrael, which he commanded our Fathers, that they ſhould make them known to their Children:* (What for?) *That they might ſet their hope in God, and not forget the Works of God, but keep his Commandments.* Nay, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt ſtrictly enjoins it, *Matt.* 6. 33. *Seek ye firſt the Kingdom of God, and the Righteouſneſs thereof.* Firſt, here does not only note the Prehemineence firſt above all, but it notes a Priority firſt before all.

It is very Obſervable, that our Saviour in that Prayer he gave to his Diſciples, which you call the Lord's Prayer, he gives but one Petition for Temporal Things, and Five for Spiritual; and that for Temporals is neither the Firſt nor the Laſt. Not the Firſt, for *Hallowed be thy Name* is before it. Nor is it the Laſt, for *Deliver us from Evil* comes after it; to teach us that we muſt begin and end with God. *Mat.* 21. 28. The Command of the Father to his Son, *Go Work to Day in my Vineyard:* The command of God brooks no Delays, the Promiſes of God have Reſpect to the Future, but

the

the Command looks to the Preſent; *To Day if you will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts.* Why did God under the Law require for himſelf the firſt Sheaf of the Harveſt, the firſt ripe Fruits, the Firſtlings of the Herd and Flock, but to teach us, that our firſt Affections, our firſt Strength, our firſt Deſires, and firſt Choice, and firſt Service, ſhould be Devoted to God? For it is the command of God, and that is the great Reaſon and Rule of all Obedience; that is one.

Another Reaſon is this, the Nature of your Extract and Original requires this. Pray where had you your Beings? Young Ones, how came you into the World? Who made you? The Text tells you who this is in the very Notion. God is mentioned in thy Creator. There is a Concatenation of Reaſon, for the Creatures Owning and Chuſing the Service of God, included in this Notion of a Creator.

Firſt, *He made us, and not we our ſelves*, Pſalm. 100. 3. The Prophet *Iſaiah* ſays, *He ſpreadeth forth the Earth, he gives Breath to the People upon it, and Spirit to them that Walk therein*, Iſaiah 42. 5. So Elihu ſays, Job 33. 4. *The Spirit of God hath made me, and the Breath of the Almighty hath given me Life*; and is it not Reaſon that he that made us ſhould be owned by us?

The Name of Father and Mother beſpeaks all Duty and Honor from you Children. If Children could begin their Duty in the Cradle, and continue it a Hundred Years, it could never Pay what Parents Deſerve for all their Sorrow, Care,

Care, Pains, and Coſt. Therefore *Solomon* is much in Preſſing this Argument upon Children, Prov. 23. 22. *Obey thy Father that Begat thee.* Mark, that Begat thee; he gave thee thy Being; *and Deſpiſe not thy Mother that brought thee Forth.* We are ever bound to Honour and Obey them for what they have done for us. Theſe Rational Beings do require it; which they have been the Means to Derive to us, and to Nouriſh and Nurſe up. This is highly Deſerved at our Hands; yea, though they grow Old and Impotent, and can ſerve us no longer. O what then does God deſerve from us, who is much more the Author of our Being than our Father that Begat us, or than our Mother that Bare us? God is the Firſt Cauſe, Parents are but the Second Cauſes of Generation; and the Second Cauſe depends upon the Firſt, and cannot act without it: Therefore it is ſaid of God, *In him we Live, and Move, and have our Being.* Therefore Man is nothing in our Production, if compared with God; and is it not Reaſon then, that he that made us, ſhould be owned and Honoured by us; that he that is our Creator, ſhould be our Ruler?

We Own our Service where we Receive our Exiſtence; we are Debtors to God every one of us. We Owe him our ſelves, all we are, and all we have; for we are not our own, we are the Lord's Propriety, at his Diſpoſal, he hath the abſolute Dominion over us, as giving Being to us. It is the Apoſtle's Argument. *Whether we Live, or Die, we are the Lord's, de jure,*

and

and it ſhould be ſo, *de facto*; therefore we ought to Live to him, *Rom.* 14. 7, 8. This Glory is the White at which we ſhould aim Living and Dying: He is the Centre in which all the whole Circumſtances of our Life ſhould meet, for he made us; therefore *Remember thy Creator.*

*Secondly*, He made us after his own Image, and that is a Peculiar Priviledge of Creation beyond what other Creatures injoy. There is the Print of God's Hand upon all his Creatures; but there are none bear his Image but Angels and Men; and this you are Stampt with in the very Womb. Not one of you but have the Image of God upon you, the Youngeſt as well as the Oldeſt.

Though indeed the Moral Image of God which conſiſts in Righteouſneſs and Holineſs, that is Blotted out and Loſt by the Fall, we have Sinned it away; yet there is the Natural Image of God, and that remains in all of you; for what is Natural Light, Knowledge, Underſtanding? What is Skill to Diſcern, and Wiſdom to Chuſe? What are all the Intellective and Elective Power of the Soul, but the Image of God in Man? And what is this Image for, but in order to Recover that which is Loſt? It is to Capacitate us to Know God, to Seek him, to Chuſe him, to Live to him here, that ſo we may for ever Enjoy him; and if we do not make this our chief Work, we are made in Vain, and Degenerate into Brutes, being wholly acted by Sence, and the Deſign of this Image is Loſt;

for

for by partaking of his Likeneſs, we become bound to his Laws.

*Thirdly*, That Power that created us at Firſt, does create us every Day: You are made of God every Day; for Preſervation is a Continued Creation. As he gives Life, ſo he holds our Souls in Life; if God withdraw from us but a Moment we ſhall Die; *Thou takeſt away their Breath, and they Die, and return to their Duſt.* And do we receive our Preſervation and Support from him, and ſhall we not pay Reſpect to him? This violates the very Law of Nature, and fills Heaven and Earth with Wonder; therefore God does Summons Heaven and Earth to hear his Complaint againſt ſuch Rebels, *Iſa.* 1. 2. *Hear, O Heaven, and give Ear, O Earth*, ſays God. But why does he Summons theſe?

Why, *Firſt*, To Rebuke and Shame the Stupidity of his People, that the Senceleſs were more like to hear God ſpeak than they.

*Secondly*, To ſhew that theſe Creatures by which God had done them much good, might well bear Witneſs on his behalf againſt their Ingratitude.

*Thirdly*, To Convince them, how Stupendious a thing it was, that God Complains of againſt them; even ſuch as the Senceleſs Creatures might ſtand amazed to hear, were they capable of that Sence.

And what is the Complaint that God makes here? It is Twofold.

The one is Horrid Ingratitude.

The other is Tranſcendent Brutiſhneſs.

*First*, Horrid Ingratitude. *Hear, O Heavens, and give Ear, O Earth.* What, muſt they hear what God hath to ſay againſt this People? The Lord hath ſaid, *I have nouriſhed and brought up Children, and they have Rebelled againſt me.* For any of us Parents to bring forth and breed up Children, and after all our Trouble, Coſt, and Care, when they are come to Years of Knowledge, not to own us: Nay, when they are grown to be Men, to turn to be Rebels, to violate ſuch Bonds, and break ſuch ſtrong Ties, Heaven and Earth may well cry out againſt them. Why, this is my Caſe, ſays God; I made theſe Children, I maintained them, I brought them up at my Coſt, and yet after all they will not Know me, they will not Own me. Inſtead of Chuſing me, they turn the Back upon me, and turn Rebels againſt me; they have not a bit of Bread to Eat, but as I feed them, nor a Rag to Wear, but as I cloath them. It is my Wooll and my Flax, yet I am forgotten, and the very Law of Nature broken. Thus God Complains of their baſe Ingratitude.

*Secondly*, He Complains of their Tranſcendent Brutiſhneſs, which was ſuch, that it outdid the moſt Brutiſh amongſt Brutes. The Ox and the Aſs are reckoned amongſt the Dulleſt and moſt Stupid Creatures; yet, ſays God, they are worſe than theſe; for *the Ox knows his Owner, and the Aſs his Maſter's Crib, but* Iſrael *doth not know me: My People doth not conſider.* Theſe Beaſts as Supid as they are, yet they after their Kind own them that Feed them,

them, and are ready at all Times to ſubmit to and ſerve them; yet, ſays God, they will not own me: Nay, ſays God, they will not ſo much as conſider what I have done for them, that thereby they might be brought to own and ſerve me. *My People doth not conſider.*

*Fourthly*, He that made us, can unmake us; he that gave us our Being, can turn us into nothing; he that created us, can deſtroy us; he who breathed thy Soul into thy Body, can take it away, and throw it into Hell. And this is the very Argument our Lord Chriſt makes uſe of, Mat. 10. 28. *Fear him who is able to caſt Body and Soul into Hell.* All theſe Arguments do reſult from the Relation we ſtand in to God as he is our Creator.

He made us.

He made us after his own Image.

He makes us continually, by preſerving us.

And he that made us can deſtroy us, and will you forget your Maker? This will provoke him, when they that are made by him ſeek not after him. *None ſays, Where is God my Maker?* Job 35. v. 10. All Worſhip, and Reſpect, and Obedience, is a juſt due to God as your Maker: You had your Being from God, therefore you ſhould always ſeek after God. It is natural for every thing to make to the place of its Original: *Solomon* ſhews it you in divers Inſtances, ſo does the Sun: *It ariſes, and goeth down, and haſteth to the place whence it aroſe*, Eccleſ. 1. v. 5. So doth the Wind, *It whirls about continually, and returneth again to its circuits*, v. 6. So does the Rivers, *Unto the place*

*from whence they came, thither they do return again*, v. 7. And ſhould not Man that is made by God, and comes from God, ſeek after God, and take up his reſt in God? Nature teacheth this.

A Circle is the moſt perfect Figure, becauſe it ends where it began; the laſt point meets in the firſt from whence it came; it is the Perfection of the Rational Creature, that had its Being from God, to ſeek after him, and terminate it ſelf in him; that is the ſecond Reaſon.

*Thirdly*, To chuſe God betimes, as it is a Duty of great concernment, ſo it is a Duty of great advantage, and benefit. Religion, however it is miſtaken in the World, is the moſt advantageous courſe any Man can take; it affords the greateſt Promiſes, the richeſt Comforts, and the ſureſt Rewards: And therefore the Holy Ghoſt tells us, *That Godlineſs is profitable for all things*, 1 Tim. 4. 8. and where lies the profit? It tells you in the next Words; *It hath the promiſe of the Life that now is*, that includes all good here; *and of the Life that is to come*, that includes all good hereafter. But to be a little particular in ſhewing you the advantages of Religion.

*Firſt*, If you have choſen God, he is yours for ever; for he becomes yours by your own choice, and you may lay claim to him as yours, and may ſay as *Thomas* did, *My Lord, and my God:* Or with *David*, *This God is our God, for ever and ever*, Pſalm 48. v. 14. And is not this a great advantage and benefit?

Nay,

Nay, you have not only a Propriety in God, but you have the ſpecial Preſence of God: However it may be as to that Preſence of God that is Arbitrary, yet you have always his Preſence in a Fourfold Senſe.

The Preſence of his Mercy, to pardon your Sins.

The Preſence of his Power, to ſupport your Perſons.

The Preſence of his Omniſcience, to know your Wants.

And the Preſence of his goodneſs, to ſupply them.

He is your God, your own God, as *David* calls him: *God, even our own God, ſhall bleſs us.* A Man can never be happy that has nothing of his own; and a Man can call nothing his own but God. All things elſe may be loſt, but he that has made ſure of God, his Right can never be invaded, nor his Propriety loſt: *Mary hath choſen that good part, which ſhall never be taken from her:* And is not this a Benefit?

*Secondly*, Is it not a great Benefit to have the Heart fixt and ſtedfaſt in the Ways of God? The Cauſe of all Haſtning in Religion, is the Want of a Choice and Purpoſe reſolutely ſet: The Apoſtle ſays, James 1. 8. *A Double-minded Man is Unſtable in all his Ways.* A Two-Soul'd Man, one that has a Heart and a Heart, one for this way, another for that; one for God, and another for the World: Such a one muſt needs be unſtable, of an inconſtant Soul; being as ready to depart from God, as to cloſe

with him. But he that owns God, and his Ways by choice, will ſuit his Converſation to his Election. If he be ſincere in his choice of God, that will make him faithful in all his carriage to God: And therefore *Joſhua*, when he would ingage the People to continue faithful with God, he draws them on to a choice, and then lays that upon their Conſcience to bind them, *Joſhua* 24. 22. *Ye are witneſſes againſt your ſelves, that ye have choſen the Lord, to ſerve him; and they ſaid, we are witneſſes.* It greatly ſtrengthens a Bond, when a Man freely binds himſelf.

*Thirdly*, This reſolute choice of God is of great advantage in carrying on the Work of the Heavenly Calling with the more eaſe and delight; becauſe a choice is nothing elſe but an inclination of the Soul guided by Judgment, ſtrengthened by Reſolution, and actuated by Love. Now as Judgment juſtifies our choice, and Reſolution makes it entire, ſo Love makes it eaſie and ſweet; and ſo our delight in obeying God, anſwers to the ſincerity of our chuſing of him.

*Fourthly*, This chuſing God gives great peace and comfort in the Ways of God; this is as natural as for the Fire to produce Heat: The Fruit of Righteouſneſs is Peace; as Sin cauſes a Sting in the Conſcience, and a Wound in the Soul, ſo every good Action done in Sincerity, hath the approbation of the Conſcience, and that gives peace, and the witneſs of the Spirit, that brings joy and comfort: This is intended in that of the Apoſtle, *Rom.* 14. 7. *The Kingdom of God is Righ-*

*Righteouſneſs, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt.* Here is a double Benefit mentioned, Peace and Joy: There is a difference between them.

Peace is a tranquility of Mind ſpringing from the rectitude of our Actions.

Joy is from the Impreſſion of the comforting Spirit.

Peace is an acquittance from Conſcience, but Joy in the Holy Ghoſt is an acquittance from God himſelf, who is our ſupream Judge, as is the beginning of that Endleſs Joy that he has prepared for them that love him.

*Fifthly*, This intitles you to a future and a fuller reward; for in chuſing God, you chuſe him for the future, as well as for the preſent; in chuſing the ways of God, you chuſe all that is intailed upon them, and that is Life and Bleſſedneſs: So ſays *Wiſdom*, *Whoſo findeth me, findeth Life.* The Word ſets before every one of us Life and Death, as *Moſes* did to that People of old, *Deut.* 30.15. Now many chuſe Death rather than Life; for they chuſe to pleaſe their Luſts, and to gratifie their carnal appetite, and therein they chuſe Death; as *Chriſt* ſays, *All they that hate me, love Death:* But he that chuſes God, and the Ways of God, chuſes Life, and he ſhall have it; he chuſes Endleſs Felicity in another World, and he ſhall never be diſappointed. O the benefit of chuſing God and his Ways! That is a Third Thing.

*Fourthly*, The Chuſing God and his Ways in our Youth, is the only Means to Prevent or Cure the many Miſchiefs that flow from our

Neglect

Neglect of it. Days of Youth are Days of Folly; now the Way to correct the Follies of Youth, is to be Wise toward God. *Childhood and Youth are Vanity.* Now the Way to Cure this Vanity, is to be Serious and Earnest about Eternity. Youth is most apt to be carried away by the Power of Lust; hence is that Counsel of the Apostle, *Flee Youthful Lusts*; and the proper Way to flee from them, is to flee to God in Christ for Help and Strength against them.

Youth has a great Advantage against Sin, had they but Wisdom to Improve this *now* in the Text. Now Sin is but Budding, and therefore may the easier be Nipt; now Corruptions are but Twigs, and therefore may sooner be Lopt off; now Lust is but Conceiving, and therefore may more easily be Stifled in the Birth. A green Wound is soon Cured, but if it be let alone long it may turn to a Gangreen that may prove Incurable. O my Brethren, there is no Age so fit, so suitable to the Nature of Religion, as Youth is.

Religion is the Christian Race; now who Chuses an old Man to run a Race? It is called a Wrestling, and who will call an old Man into the Ring that is ready to have his Heels tript up by his own Age? It is called a Warfare, and under the Law the Aged were Discharged from War, to shew that it is the proper Work of Youth. Religion is a Calling, a High, a Holy, a Heavenly Calling. Now Youth is the fittest Season for Chusing any Calling; and therefore the Text bids us to Chuse the Heavenly

venly Calling, by Chuſing God in the Days of our Choice.

The Chuſing of worldly Things firſt ſhuts God out of our Thoughts, and Senſual Objects quickly draw the Heart from God; therefore you ſhould Chuſe God firſt; that is the Fourth Thing.

*Fifthly*, (To name no more) No Man knows how ſoon his Day of Grace may be paſt, therefore he ought to Chuſe God betimes. The Seaſons of your Cloſing with God are Arbitrary. Salvation is not to be had when you will, but when God will; and God's Will is that you ſhould ſeek after it now in your Youth. God hath his ſet Time of finding; *Seek the Lord while he may be found*, *Iſa.* 55. 6. And let me tell you, if God's Time be once paſt, though you ſeek him you will never find him; *They ſhall ſeek me Early, but they ſhall not find me*, *Prov.* 1. 28. I ſay this is the very thing, that moſt periſh upon their ſlighting of God's Time. *Eſau* he would have had the Bleſſing, but alas he came too late, he miſſed the Seaſon, *Heb.* 12. 6. The Fooliſh Virgins would fain have entred in, but when they ſhould have entred, their Oil was to Get; and when they would have entred, the Door was Shut: You ſhould therefore Chuſe God betimes, becauſe you know not how ſoon the Day of Grace may be paſt. Theſe are the Reaſons of the Point.

And now I come to the Application, and I ſhall make but two Uſes of it.

One by Way of Trial: And,

The other by Way of Counſel.

*Firſt*,

*First*, By Way of Trial; you have heard, young Ones, what your Duty is; to begin with God in the firſt Place, and make him the Object of your Choice. Now the Queſtion I would ask you, is, what have you done in this Matter? You that are in your Youth and Prime of your Days, what have you done in this Matter? Now is your chuſing time, pray what Choice have you made? It is a needful Queſtion, God help you to anſwer it in your own Hearts. One Chuſes this Imploy, another that; one Chuſes to go to Sea, another Chuſes to tarry on Shore; one Chuſes this Calling, another Chuſes that; but have you Choſen God to be your God? Have you ever made that Choice? It was *David*'s Queſtion to the *Egyptian*, 1 *Sam.* 30. 14. *To whom belongeſt thou?* To whom belongeſt thou, young Ones, to whom do you belong? Pray, do you belong to God? Why, you will ſay, how may I know this? It can't be known *a Priori*, as we ſay, by God's Chuſing of you, that is an Eminent Act, and Eminent Acts cannot give Evidence, they Prove nothing; therefore it muſt be known *a Poſteriori*, by ſome Subſequent Act of God's own.

There are two Ways of being the Lord's People, but there is but one Way of knowing it; we are made his both by his Act and our own; by his Electing of us, and by our Electing of him. Now we cannot know that we are God's by his Act, by his Chuſing of us; but we may know it by our Act, by our Chuſing of him. This is the Queſtion that I would put to you;

have

have you ſeriouſly Choſen God to be your God? Did you ever make this Choice? This muſt be before any one can lay a true Claim to him. God will never be yours (let me tell you) without your own Choice. Now have you ever Choſen God? I do not mean at a Preſent Pinch; it may be under the Checks of Conſcience, or in ſome Preſent Diſtreſs, many will take God to be their God, but this Choice ſeldom comes to any thing, it laſts but till the Storm is over, and the Diſtreſs removed; but have you ever choſe God in the Sence Deſcribed? Have you Choſen him by a Deliberate Act of the Will Guided by Judgment, and with full Purpoſe of Heart to cleave to God? How ſhall I know this, you will ſay? Briefly, there are divers Ways by which it may be known; I will name but Two or Three. It may be known,

*Firſt*, By a Self-dedication and devoting of your ſelves to be the Lord's. Whenever the Soul truly Chuſes God for his God, it is always accompanied with a Self-dedication to God. So it is ſaid of thoſe *Macedonians*, 2 *Cor.* 8. 5. *They gave themſelves to the Lord.* Now what can you ſay to this? Have you ever given up your ſelves to be the Lord's, reſolving to live in an Intire Submiſſion to his Will: Have you ever made a Solemn Covenant between God and your own Souls; that God ſhall be your God, and that you, through his Grace, will be his? Why, if ſo, then you have Choſen God, and he is your God.

*Secondly*, It may be known by your Behaviour

our in Reference to Sin. When you are Tempted to any Sin, either by Satan, or by your own Lusts, what do you do? Do you give Way to it, or do you run to Christ for Strength against it? Do you Comply with it, or do you Resist it? Do you Countenance or Curb it? Is it Loved or Hated? This is no hard Case to Determine, every Child can tell what he Loves, and what he Hates. No one that Lives in the Love of any known Sin, can say that ever he hath Chosen God; mind it, any one Lust indulged, will certainly confute this claim: For where Sin is Loved, there it Reigns, and where Sin Reigns God is Disowned: And can any one Disown God, and yet say he hath Chosen God? It cannot be.

*Thirdly*, It may be known by your Obedience: He that Chuses God for his chief Good, Chuses him for his only Lord, and that necessarily inferrs Obedience to him in all things. So says the Apostle, *His Servants ye are to whom ye obey*, *Rom.* 6. 16. Many make their Boast of God, and Claim a Propriety in him, but whom do you obey? Pray mind that doth the Flesh bear sway? Doth Pride reign? Do youthful Lusts and Vanities command the Heart? Why then I tell you, God was never the Object of your Choice; you may Profess him, and Talk of God, but you have never Chosen God for your God. It is not Profession, but Affection and Action that must warrant our Title to God.

*David*, Psalm 119. 94. tells God, *I am thine Lord, I am thine*. Ay, but how does he prove it

it? Why, ſays he, *I have ſought thy Precepts.* Pray mind, he does not only ſay, I have kept thy Precepts, I have done them, but I have ſought them: Now to ſeek them is much more than barely to do them. It implies Four Things.

*Firſt*, An earneſt Deſire to know them; and that is a great Evidence of an upright Heart, and a ſincere Love to God, to be Inquiſitive into the Will of God.

*Secondly*, It implies an Affection and Reſpect; no Man ſeeks what he doth not Love: *I have Reſpect* (ſays *David*) *to all thy Commandments.*

*Thirdly*, It implies a conſtant Endeavour to Practice them; for the end of ſeeking is keeping; we ſeek to know his Will, that we may do it; and therefore ſeeking and keeping are put together. *Pſalm* 119. 2. *Bleſſed are they that keep his Teſtimonies, and that ſeek him with the whole Heart.*

*Fourthly*, It implies earneſt Deſires after higher Meaſures of Grace, for the bettering of our Obedience; this is ſeeking. Now ſuch a ſeeking is a ſure Evidence of your chuſing of God. O therefore that I could prevail with Young Ones to come to the Trial in this Matter, whether ever you have really choſen God or no! And I tell you why I urge it; for Three Reaſons.

*Firſt*, Becauſe it is about the moſt concerning caſe in the World; as it is the greateſt Duty in the World to ſeek after God, ſo it is the greateſt Priviledge in the World to know my Intereſt in God; therefore it is a Matter worth Inquiring into. What if all the World were thine? If

God be not thine, you are undone; and will you not know whether he be yours or no?

*Secondly*, I urge it becauſe of the Treachery and Deceitfulneſs of your Hearts; *The Heart is Deceitful above all things*; (the Prophet ſays ſo) in Young Ones eſpecially, and in nothing more than in this Matter. How fondly and preſumptuouſly do many Boaſt of their Propriety in God, when alas they have no manner of Intereſt in him? It was the very caſe of *Laodicea*, ſhe thought herſelf Rich, Increaſed in Goods, and that ſhe ſtood in need of nothing, when at the ſame time ſhe needed all things, and was Wretched and Miſerable.

The Apoſtle ſays, *If any Man think himſelf Something, when he is Nothing, he deceives himſelf*; and the Reaſon why many are thus Deceived, is becauſe they truſt to their own flattering Opinion, and are not ſenſible what a cheating Impoſtor they carry in their own Boſoms. Pride and Self-love will never believe any thing againſt Self, and ſo it takes that for granted, which ought to be proved; and ſhould we not Try in this Matter?

*Thirdly*, A well-grounded Evidence of our Intereſt in God, is that which will comfort us when nothing elſe in the World can; that is, in a dying Hour; then is the time when all other Comforts will certainly fail, when a Man looks upon himſelf as Launching into another World, and begins to conſider in Earneſt what ſhall become of his Precious Soul; how terrifying muſt ſuch Thoughts be to me that has no Evidence of his Intereſt in God? Nothing but

but this can ſupport the Soul at ſuch a time. It is this your chuſing God that will Inable you to Triumph over Death, and the Grave, to ſay with the Apoſtle, *O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory?* It is true, natural Fears may be ſtrong, and the Thoughts of Diſſolution may ſhake us, but a well-grounded Evidence of our Intereſt in God will notwithſtanding carry us through all.

What would one give when he lies upon a Dying Bed, for one good ground of Hope that God is his? Why now is the time to bring this Matter to a good Iſſue: Now is your time; and therefore it is highly Neceſſary you ſhould put this Matter upon Trial, whether God be yours or no. So much for that Uſe.

The next Uſe ſhall be by Way of Counſel and Exhortation, and I would ſpeak to it in two Branches.

*Firſt*, To ſuch of you, Young Ones, that have never yet choſen God; that have never remembred God in the Day of your Choice.

And then to them that have done ſo.

*Firſt*, To thoſe Young Ones that never as yet have choſen God for theirs, but have lived without God in the World to this Day; I would ſay to you as *Elihu* ſaid, *Job* 34. 4. *Let us chuſe to our ſelves Judgment, that we may know what is good.* To chuſe Judgment, is to chuſe judiciouſly, with mature deliberation; that is the way to know what is good. The reaſon why ſo many put Darkneſs for Light, and Light for Darkneſs, Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter, it is for want of chuſing in

Judgment, and ſo knowing what they chuſe. Now my Meſſage to you this Day is, to diſcharge this Duty; you Young Ones, God hath ſent me this Day to ſpeak to you; you that have yet ſeen but the Third Hour of the Day, I am ſent this Day to you, you are called in the Name of the God that made you, and put Breath into your Noſtrils; in the Name of the Lord Chriſt, who ſhed his Blood to redeem you from Sin and Hell: In his Name I now ſpeak, this Call is from him, and the Buſineſs you are called to, is to be ſo kind to your own Souls, as to take God in Chriſt from this Day for your God; remember to chuſe God now in your chuſing Days. When thou chuſeſt a Calling, by which to maintain thy ſelf; when thou chuſeſt a Wife, with whom to ſpend thy Days, O then be ſure above all chuſing, chuſe God to be thy God.

I might multiply Motives to preſs this Duty upon you: Take a few.

*Firſt*, Your giving your ſelves to God, it is but paying a Debt, a juſt Debt; what *Paul* ſays of *Philemon*, God may ſay much more to us, thou oweſt to me even thy own ſelf: For whence came you? Where had you your ſelves, but from him, the Origin of all Being? Therefore 'tis but Juſtice to let God have his own. God gave you your ſelves, but let me tell you, he did not give you a Propriety in your ſelves; that is a Right God cannot part with; therefore you are not your own, nor can you be: God gave you a Life, he gave you a Soul, he gave you Underſtanding, he gave you a Will, he

gave

gave you a Conſcience, he gave you Affections, he gave you all things, but for what intent? Not to eſtabliſh a Dominion in your own Perſons, but only a Stewardſhip, and a courſe of Service; you are not Lords of your own Lives, but Keepers of them for God; therefore ſays the Apoſtle, If we live, we are to live to the Lord, for no Man lives to himſelf.

*Secondly*, Conſider how freely God offers himſelf to be yours; the Arms of his Mercy they are opened to embrace you, and he is ready to forgive and forget all that is paſt, whatever thy Sins are, or have been: He calls Heaven and Earth to record, that if you miſcarry, the blame is not in him; you have his Oath, that he takes no pleaſure in the Death of a Sinner; and therefore he calls ſo earneſtly, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?* Now pray, what anſwer can you make, if ſuch Tenders of God, and ſuch Bowels of Love, ſhould be ungratefully ſlighted?

*Thirdly*, Conſider the Deſign of Chriſt: The great Deſign of Chriſt, what he hath done, and what he is doing; he hath ſtood in your ſtead to bear the Wrath of God, which you and I muſt elſe have born for ever.

Suppoſe you heard Chriſt ſaying to you, Soul, why (thinkeſt thou) did I take up thy Nature? Why was guilt charged upon me? Why was I numbred amongſt the Tranſgreſſors? Why was I made a Man of Sorrows? Why was my Hands nailed, my Side pierced, my Head crowned with Thorns? Why was my deareſt Blood poured out? What canſt thou conceive

ſhould move me to undergo the bitter, the accurſed Death of the Croſs, if not to ſave thee from thy Sins, and bring thee to God? And haſt thou no need of a Chriſt now, and of his Righteouſneſs? Why, ſays he, I am ready at thy call, ſpeak and tell me what thou wanteſt? I am now in Heaven, at my Father's right hand ready to relieve thee; ask what thou wilt, I will preſent thy Prayers to my Father, perfumed with my Righteouſneſs, and they ſhall all be granted. O what Encouragement ſhould this be to come to Chriſt! Go thy way, Young One, take thy Life in thy Hand, as once *Eſther* did; preſent thy Petition, and ſay with her, *If I find favour in thine Eyes, let my Life be given at my requeſt:* Let my Soul live by a Saving Intereſt in God.

*Fourthly*, Conſider what joy thy chuſing of, and cloſing with God betimes, will cauſe in Heaven: I tell you, there is not the Youngeſt, the Meaneſt of you, but you may help to fill all the Angels in Heaven with Joy. How is that? Why take Hod for your God, and it will be ſo. O how theſe Noble Creatures triumph to ſee the leaſt increaſe of Chriſt's Kingdom! If there be but one Lamb, one Young One in all this Aſſembly added to the Flock of Chriſt this Day, all the Angels in Heaven will rejoice, Ay, all the Angels in Heaven; nay, it will be the Day of the very gladneſs of Chriſt's Heart; *For as the Bridegroom rejoices over his Bride, ſo ſhall thy God rejoice over thee*, Iſa. 62. 5.

*Fifthly*, Conſider how uncertain the meaſure of thy Life is; thou mayeſt think to live many

Years,

Years, and yet may'ſt die ſoon: How many have you gone after to the grave, that came after you into the World? *Job* ſays, (ſpeaking of the Sinner) *The number of his Months are cut off in the midſt*, Job 21. 21. It is not only a Deſcription of Death, but of Early Death; an immature Death is the cutting off our Months in the midſt; this is that *David* deprecates, *Take me not away in the midſt of my Days*: As our Times are in God's Hand, in regard of the event of them, ſo they are in regard of the length of them; either God may not give thee time to grow old, or not a heart to repent when thou art old: When ſo many offers of grace are refuſed, and ſo many motions of the Spirit reſiſted by thee, I tell thee thy heart is in great danger of being for ever hardened.

How many Young Ones are now awake, and that for ever, in Endleſs Flames, that would never open their Eyes to ſee their danger till they came thither?

That is an aweful Word, *Pſalm* 58. 9. *Before your Pots can feel the Thorns, he ſhall take them away, as with a Whirlwind, both living, and in his Wrath.*

[*Before your Pots can feel the Thorns*:] That is, before you have any real ſenſe of your danger. To what ſhall I compare the Miſeries of Young Ones, that are taken away ſo often in the midſt of all their Pleaſure, before ever they thought of Death? It is a thing ſad, beyond compariſon, beyond all expreſſion: Have you then, Young Ones, no pity for your Souls? Or do you

you reſolve not to prepare for the Tryal, till the Aſſizes come, and the Judge ſits on the Bench?

If we had a certain knowledge from Heaven, that this was the laſt Sermon we ſhould ever hear, that this was the Laſt Call to *Remember our Creator* that God would ever allow us, that we ſhould be in another World before another Day comes about, with how many Tears ſhould we bewail our Folly of neglecting God? And how ſhould we rend the Heaven with cries, that God would own us, and help us to own him; and that he would reprieve us a little longer, that we might make ſure of an Intereſt in him, *before we go hence, and be no more?* And why ſhould we not do ſo now, ſeeing *we know not the day nor hour when the Son of Man will come?*

The Lord awaken Young Ones (for none elſe can awaken them) and perſwade them to ſeek after God betimes: O that you would be perſwaded to this! He is the moſt Eligible Object in the World; they that have choſen him will tell you ſo, they have found him ſo; you will never have cauſe to repent of your choice; you may have cauſe to repent of other choices. None ever made a carnal choice, but he repented firſt or laſt; either here, with a godly Sorrow, whilſt matters were capable of retrieving; or in Eternal Miſery, where there is repentance without returning: But who ever repented of chuſing God? Name one that ever did: *Job* once curſed the Day of his Birth, but who ever curſed the Day of his New Birth? Who ever repented of

of his closing with Christ, or of his being sanctified and made like God?

When Death comes, then the cry begins amongst carnal Sinners; How have I hated Instruction! How have I forgotten God, and my Eternal Interest! How have I regarded Lying Vanities, to the forsaking of my own Mercies! O this Flattering World! How hath it deceived and undone me! This will be your cry when you come to a Sick Bed. Now did you ever hear any one say, I have chosen God, but God hath deceived me? I have ventured my Soul upon the Lord Christ for Pardon, for Righteousness, and Christ hath deceived me? I have chosen the Way of Holiness, and that hath deceived and misled me? Did you ever hear such a Complaint? No; nor never shall.

Arise then, Young Ones; in the Name of the Lord, I say to thee, arise, and shake your selves from the Dust and Vanities of Youth, betake your selves out of hand to God in Christ, make Religion your Business, whatever you do, for the Lord's sake; this will make you a Blessing in your Generation.

Truly, let me tell you, the Days we live in, calls aloud upon you Youth, in this matter; we are in declining times, sad times, for Religion it loses ground apace in this Age; and if God do not stir up the Young Generation to keep up Religion, I tell you it will be quite lost in the next. O therefore, that you would resolve to devote your selves heartily and betimes to the Lord; never think it too soon to

seek

ſeek him, nor too long to ſerve him: You will not count a whole Eternity too long for your own Happineſs, do not therefore count your whole Life too much for God's Service. I had thought to have laid down ſome Directions for your guidance and help in this great Duty of chuſing God, I will but name Five or Six.

*Firſt*, Labour for a deep ſenſe of your Natural State; this furthers the Work. No Man comes to Chriſt till he is weary and heavy laden; and that no one is, or can be, till a ſenſe of Sin, and of his Natural State, makes him ſo.

*Secondly*, Another ſhould have been this: Whenever the Spirit of the Lord ſtrives with you, carry it becomingly to him, eſpecially in Two Things:

Labour to know his Striving Seaſons: And,

Labour to cheriſh all his Motions. Then,

*Thirdly*, I would have ſaid, Do not conſult Fleſh and Blood on the one hand, nor give ear to the Suggeſtions of Satan on the other, for he will always draw you from God.

*Fourthly*, Do not put off this Work of chuſing God from time to time, but reſolve to ſet upon it now without any more delay. And,

*Fifthly*, Beſure ſhun the Converſation of ſuch as Deride and Scoff at ſerious Godlineſs, and ſuch as deny all Revealed Religion; it will be the Undoing of your Souls elſe: And then I would have ſaid,

*Laſtly*,

*Lastly*, Beg the renewing Grace of God to carry on all. Fear and Shame may conceal a Sinner, Morality may Varnish him, but it is only renewing Grace can change him, and bring him to chuse God for his God.

And then I would have spoken to the second Branch of the Exhortation; that is, to such of you as have chosen God in your Early Days. I am perswaded I speak to many such this Day; many Young Ones, who have chosen God in their chusing Time. Why,

*First*, Bless God: O bless him, magnifie his Grace, who hath counselled and inclined your Hearts to this! When *David* had chosen God for his Portion, he presently cries out, *I will bless the Lord, who hath given me Counsel*, *Psal.* 16. 7. O Sirs! What a blessed Thing is it to be an early Convert, to be an early Christian? It is not only Matter of Comfort to you, but I tell you, it is a Comfort to your poor Ministers. How do they Rejoice when they can beget one Soul to Christ? What says *Paul* to the *Philippians*, to whom God had blessed his Ministry, in their Conversion, *Ye are our Crown and our Joy*, *Phil.* 4. 1. And again to them, 1 *Thes.* 2. 20. *Ye are our Glory, and our Joy*; we bless God that blesseth us to bring in any one of you to Christ.

O that every Young One in this Place were of this Number! You are our Comfort that God has some to keep up Religion when we are Dead and Gone.

You are a Comfort likewise to your Godly Parents, that can in you see the Return of many Prayers,

Prayers, and that they can now Die with Comfort, becauſe they leave you their Children, to Walk in the Steps of your Fathers, and to Honor God when they are gone to Heaven. O it is a bleſſed Sight to ſee Young Ones Walk with God! Therefore bleſs God for inclining your Hearts to this, whilſt you have a Day to Live.

*Secondly*, Let it be your Care to renew your choice of God every Day; renew your choice of God daily, and alſo the Dedication of your ſelves unto God: Our firſt Dedication is not enough, though it may be Sincere; therefore it muſt be Improved by repeated Acts: We ſhould be often renewing our Choice of the Lord, and ſhould think it not enough to be the Lord's, but we ſhould labour to be more the Lord's; for let me tell you, though God cannot be more ours, yet we may be more his; and one Excellent Way to be ſo, is by chuſing God, and dedicating our ſelves to God.

*Laſtly*, Live as they that have choſen God for their God; your claim is high, let your carriage be anſwerable. In ſhort, if you have indeed choſen God, and have given up your ſelves to him, make it appear, let it be known, prove it by all Acts proper to ſuch a Previledge. How is that? By daily putting off the Old Man, and putting on the New; by Dying more to Sin, and Living more to Righteouſneſs, giving up your ſelves to the conduct and leadings of the Spirit, to be guided by him in all his Motions, making the Word of God the whole Rule of your Lives, labouring in all things to Walk worthy of God, who hath called

called you to his Kingdom and Glory; and in so doing you will have a sure evidence, that you have obeyed this Call of God in the Text, *Remember now thy Creator in the Days of thy Choice.*

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## *A Word of Advice to Youth in order to Conversion.*

GOD, as a Sovereign God and Creator, hath given all his Creatures to every one their Work, *Mark* 13.34. Then the Query may be, How may I know my Work? In answer thereto, a Man must be considered as to the State that he is in; and this takes in all, either Carnal and Unconverted, or else Regenerated; either in Christ, and so a New Creature; or else abiding in his Lust, and so in a Fallen State. Now do but consider what thy State is, and that will direct thee what thy Work is.

In answering this Question, it lyes in Three Things more especially.

1. In getting a Sound Knowledge of God, and Self-labour to know God, *Which is Life Eternal*, John 17. 3. No one can be capable of Grace without Knowledge; therefore this is the great and First Duty of them that are young, to Labour for a Saving Knowledge of Christ.

2. For a Right Knowledge of ones Self; which can never be without ſound and thorough Conviction of Sin; for Corruption lyes ſo hid, that they are not eaſily diſcerned; for till the Sinner ſees his Miſery, he will never ſeek a Remedy.

3. That you make the Work of Grace an abiding Work; when it reaches only to the Affections, it is liable to miſcarry; be willing to be convinced of Sin; how vile ſoever your State is, yet labour to know it.

2. The next Great Work is, Believing on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and receiving him on the Terms tendered in the *Goſpel*; this is Faith in its right kind; it doth not only conſent to the Truths of the *Goſpel*, but receives Chriſt; and this is Faith that always accompanies a right Repentance, and a ſincere Obedience: This is called the Work of God, upon a Threefold account.

1. Becauſe God commands it above all other Works; this is his Coommand, that we ſhould believe on the Name of Jeſus Chriſt.

2. It is called the Work of God, becauſe where-ever it is, it is wrought by God; Faith is not of our ſelves, it is the gift of God.

3. It is called the Work of God, becauſe it is God's Special Work, *Rom.* 3. 26.

Converſion Work is to beg of God a New Nature: There is a Twofold Change, one made by the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt imputed; the other by Inherent Holineſs infuſed: Juſtification gives a Man a Title to Heaven, but it is Regeneration that qualifies for Heaven, 1 *Joh.* 5. 56.

5. 5, 6. therefore your Work is to labour after Inherent Holineſs, as well as a Juſtifying Righteouſneſs, *For without Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee the Lord.*

Ready Obedience to the Call of God, is a good Evidence of the Power and Efficacy of Conviction on the Conſcience, which leaves no Room for debating; *Immediately I conſulted not with Fleſh and Blood*, Gal. 1. 16.

4. Becauſe putting off the Duty for the preſent doth more unfit us for it, and indiſpoſe the Heart for it. He that hath no diſpoſition for God to Day, may have leſs to Morrow: Didſt thou but know the gift of God, thou wouldſt ſay with the *Spouſe*, *A Bundle of Mirth is my Beloved, to me, he ſhall lye all Night between my Breaſt*: And yet how often is the putting off the cloſing with Chriſt from Childhood to Youth, and from Youth to Manhood, and from Manhood to Old Age, and from Old Age to Death.

1. It is a Buſineſs of great Neceſſity, and there is no Excuſe for preſent Neceſſity.

2. It is a Matter of Spiritual Concernment, Therefore improve the preſent Seaſon, make conſcience now of ſeeking and begging converting Grace.

Three things by way of Motive.

1. The Neceſſity of the State calls for it, as it is Sinful: Make conſcience of a diligent attendance on the Word preached, for *Faith comes by hearing.*

2. Whenever the Word of God ſtrives with you, beſure you carry it wiſely and becomingly; there

there is none of you that ſit under a powerful awakning Miniſtry, but you have felt ſome or other of that Striving: Now whenever the Spirit of God ſtrives with you, let me give you two Words of Counſel, with reſpect to the Spirit of God: Endeavour to know the Spirit's Strivings, and labour to cheriſh his Motions: It is the beſt Counſel I can give you, therefore never forget it when I am dead and gone; and you may eaſily know it by dwelling more within: For doth not the Spirit come cloſer at one time than another? for the Word of it ſelf is but a Dead Letter.

Therefore if you find the Affections warmed, animated and quickened, the Spirit of God is at work on that Soul at that time: Are there not ſometimes ſtrong Conflicts between Life and Luſt, between Knowledge and Practice? Now then by ſuch Characters as theſe, thou muſt learn to know the Seaſon of the Spirit of God's ſtrivings to a thorough Conviction, and a ſound Converſion; and not reſting in Conviction, till thou haſt improved them to Converſion; preſs on the Soul the abſolute neceſſity of this Duty, as to the Seaſon now, and as to the Deſign of it: As Yeſterday cannot be recalled, ſo there is a neceſſity for the preſent time to be improved; therefore it is our Duty to follow the Bleſſed Example of our Lord Chriſt, *I muſt work the work of him that ſent me, while it is Day, the Night cometh when none can work.*

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